

Hispanic Celebration Highlights Study of Foreign Language and Cultural Diversity

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With all students from PreK-3 through eighth grade focused and prepared to participate, it was a traditional Monday morning meeting at Independent Day School-Corbett Campus (IDS-CC). However, this particular assembly took on a decidedly Latin flair as students from every division created and shared with their fellow students a Hispanic Celebration right inside Corbett Hall.

Middle school students tapped their feet and whirled in circles as they expertly demonstrated the intricate movements of the salsa rueda. Primary and intermediate students recited poetry in Spanish with poise and perfect inflection, as a slide show display of student art flashed behind them.

The celebration capped weeks of work and preparation for participation in the annual Hispanic Cultural Festival of Tampa. IDS-CC students shared their presentations, which included live performances and a display of drawings, paintings and sculpture representing the flavor of Hispanic foods.

Participation in the festival is one of the optional opportunities the IDS-CC Spanish team, comprised of Odette Figueruelo, Charmaine Jennings and Sonia Morgan, offer students to enhance their academic language studies. The study of Spanish is an integral component of the IDS curriculum beginning in the earliest pre-kindergarten classes when children are three and four years old, throughout middle school to eighth grade.

Research shows that studying a foreign language creates an abundance of opportunities for student growth and success, in addition to benefits that last a lifetime. Analyzing and higher order thinking skills increase. Creativity gets a boost. English skills including reading comprehension improve. Standardized test scores rise. Listening skills and memory are enhanced. Openness and appreciation of other cultures is developed. Future job opportunities multiply. Self-concept and sense of achievement expand.

“Language instruction opens up pathways in the brain when introduced at an early age,” said Morgan. “The younger the students are when they begin a second language, the more naturally they are to acquire it and sound like a native speaker. That’s one of the reasons why the students who recited poetry during the Hispanic celebration were so impressive.”

“One of our goals is to build confidence so that when our students continue with Spanish in high school, they can do it with self-assurance, knowing how to effectively utilize a variety of resources,” said Jennings who teaches grades seven and eight. “We also want to help students develop a love for the language and for the culture.”

That love was beaming from the faces of student presenters and dancers throughout their Hispanic Celebration performances. “We were extremely proud of their dedication and effort,” said Figueruelo. “They showed such joy and enthusiasm and were able to share that joy with the whole school.”

Founded in 1968, Independent Day School-Corbett Campus is a fully accredited, independent school located on Orange Grove Drive in northwest Hillsborough County with 550 students from PreK3 through 8th grade. At IDS, all children experience learning in a nurturing and highly academic environment focused on excellence and developing a positive self-concept. IDS-CC has become recognized as an exemplary school with over 3,500 visitors observing and learning from and with IDS-CC teachers. For more information about IDS visit www.idsy.com.